

Natick 360

Honoring Our Past. Planning Our Future.



Natick Value and Vision Statements¹

As citizens of Natick, we value:

- Natick’s “small-town” sense as a safe, interconnected community fed by its heritage, pride and spirit of volunteerism, and by its diversity, derived from its tradition of affordability and welcoming nature;
- Natick’s stewardship of its diverse open spaces, and natural resources;
- A high-value education for students at all levels and abilities, and continuing educational opportunities for all Natick citizens;
- A variety of businesses that create a wide range of jobs and provide support to the community in many ways;
- Natick Center, a vibrant focal point of our community;
- Natick’s abundance of cultural, recreational and educational facilities, wide array of municipal services, and proximity to major transit and transportation resources that contribute to our high quality of life.

As citizens of Natick, we aspire to create a future in which:

- Natick is a healthy community of diverse and interconnected citizens, businesses, organizations and neighborhoods, where citizens of all ages, backgrounds and income levels can live, work and thrive;
- Natick’s natural resources are preserved and accessible to the community;
- Natick Center is the vibrant core of the community, a unique and accessible destination for commerce, community and culture, day and night;
- Natick’s public schools and programs are recognized as among the best;
- Natick’s self-government, supported by informed and engaged citizens, is fiscally sound, delivers services efficiently and communicates effectively with the public;
- Natick’s public infrastructure and buildings fulfill their function efficiently and effectively to the satisfaction of the community, and are maintained in good working order;
- Natick is a desirable and accessible destination that marshals local and regional partners and resources to solve problems and enhance the quality of life for all its citizens.

¹ Note: Value and Vision Statements are in random order. No prioritization is implied.

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Natick Value and Vision Statements, Ver. 3 Based on Boards & Committees Comments

Strategic Planning Overview

Natick, along with many other communities in the region, faces serious challenges regarding growth, development and finance. The future will continue to bring new proposals for growth and development, and Natick will face difficult decisions about the types and level of municipal services offered under increasing financial constraints.

Developing a long-range strategic plan through broad participation of community members, and under the authority of elected and appointed boards, will help Natick prioritize investment of limited resources in the context of a long-range vision for the town. It will also help increase civic participation in Natick's local government, and identify outside funding sources to leverage tax dollars.

Natick 360 is the Town of Natick's long-range strategic planning process. It is sponsored by, and run under the authority of, the town's Board of Selectmen, Planning Board, Finance Committee, Conservation Commission and School Committee. In April 2006, Town Meeting appropriated funds to implement the *Natick 360* process. These funds have been supplemented by private donations from generous corporate sponsors.²

Five major benefits accrue to the Town of Natick through this planning process. The *Natick 360* planning process will:

- Assemble a rich source of information about the town's history and current condition;
- Identify what residents value in the community and their hopes for the future;
- Provide information to help boards set priorities and advance collaboration, identifying areas for shared resources and complementary efforts;
- Promote Natick as a desirable community for investment and identify areas of leverage to attract additional resources (businesses, investors, outside funding); and
- Increase public participation and develop a pool of future civic leaders.

The *Natick 360* planning process will be developed over 16 months. The final plan document, including specific actions and estimated costs, will be submitted for approval at Fall Town Meeting in October 2007. The sponsoring boards may call for a committee to be formed to review progress against the Strategic Plan halfway through the projected five-year implementation period.

The *Natick 360* planning process is managed by the Strategic Planning Oversight Committee (SPOC). The nine members of the oversight committee, made up of one designee from each of the sponsoring boards and 4 members of the community-at-large, are:

² As of publication of this document, corporate sponsors for *Natick 360* are Middlesex Savings Bank, Natick Federal Savings Bank, Eastern Bank, WebReply, Inc., MetroWest Subaru and Belkin Lookout Farm.

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- Rosemary Driscoll, designee of the Natick School Committee
- Terri Evans, community-at-large
- Matthew Gardner, designee of the Conservation Commission
- John Heerwagen, community-at-large
- David Parish, Co-Chair, designee of the Board of Selectmen
- George Richards, designee of the Planning Board
- Craig Ross, Co-Chair, designee of the Finance Committee
- Harlee Strauss, community-at-large
- Fred Witte, community-at-large

The SPOC is charged with managing the planning process, recommending professional consultants and overseeing their work on the project, engaging the public to participate in the process, and coordinating involvement by the sponsoring boards. The SPOC is only a facilitation committee. Final authority for all outcomes of the process rests with the sponsoring boards and with Town Meeting.

The *Natick 360* planning process has four phases:

- Phase I – Our Community Yesterday and Today
- Phase II – Our Shared Vision for the Future
- Phase III – Our Strategic Options
- Phase IV – Our Strategic Choices

Phase I (June-September 2006) produced a report that describes Natick's history and the current conditions in the community. This report describes the baseline conditions in Natick that should be recognized in planning for the future.

Phase II (October-December of 2006) focuses on current attitudes and future hopes: developing a set of shared visions and values for the Natick community. The cornerstone of the visioning process was the "Vision for the Future Weekend" on October 27-29, 2006. During the weekend, members of the public met with skilled facilitators to discuss current community values and hopes for the future. This information, and information drawn from focus groups, on-going surveys, community meetings and meeting with the sponsoring board and committees, has been consolidated in this Values and Vision report.

During Phase III, the elected and appointed boards in Natick will work with experts to develop a number of strategic options – different scenarios for establishing policies or programs that could be implemented in each strategic focus area. The various strategic options will be presented in a report "Natick: Our Strategic Options" in April 2007.

Finally, in Phase IV, the public will be invited to prioritize the various strategic options that will shape Natick's future. The results of these community meetings will be tested by a scientific sample survey of the community at large.

The final Strategic Plan will be created by the sponsoring boards, after consideration of the results of the Phase IV priorities and the scientific sample survey. The final strategic plan report will be submitted for approval by Town Meeting in the fall of 2007.

Introduction to Natick's Vision for the Future

Some communities allow the future to happen to them. Successful communities recognize the future is something they can create. These communities take the time to produce a vision of the future they desire and employ a process that helps them achieve their goals.

The Community Vision and Strategic Planning Handbook
National Civic League, 2000

Creating Vision and Value Statements

Good strategic plans are built upon a clear understanding of the desired end goals. Phase II of *Natick 360* is designed to produce a community-wide vision for the future of Natick.

In order to gather information from the public to create Natick's vision for the future, *Natick 360* conducted a "Vision for the Future Weekend"³ event on October 27-29, 2006 at Wilson Middle School. A total of 327 citizens participated during the weekend event, speaking to facilitators about what they value about Natick and their hopes and dreams for the future of the community.

In addition, *Natick 360* offered a series of surveys to businesses, community organizations and citizens, both in paper form and on-line at the *Natick 360* website (www.natick360.org). More than 200 survey responses were received. In total, more than 500 residents participated in creating set of value and vision statements that follow.

Community input was consolidated by the strategic planning consultants into a series of categorized lists. The sponsoring boards for *Natick 360*, and a group of volunteers from the public, reviewed the consolidated public input and identified area of consensus. The results of these work sessions were then further consolidated into the vision and value statements included in this document.

The Structure of Vision and Value Statements

Although distinctions between value and vision may be subtle, the *Natick 360* process defines a value as a current attribute of Natick that people treasure and hope to preserve. A vision is a hoped-for future attribute of Natick that may or may not exist today.

The vision and value statements are crafted as complete sentences that can be independently evaluated. Although consolidating a series of complex ideas expressed by more than 500 people into a simple set of sentences is difficult, we believe these statements capture the essence of what was communicated by the public and the sponsoring boards. Recognizing the benefit of examples and exposition, we have included a section that contains additional detail for each vision and value statement.

These value and vision statements are in random order; no priority ranking is intended. Repeated key words reflect ideas that overlap multiple value or vision statements; repetition does not denote relative importance. Some statements have few words while others are more verbose; the volume of material does not indicate their relative importance.

³ Sponsors of the Vision for the Future Weekend included the *Natick 360* sponsors (Middlesex Savings Bank, Natick Federal Savings Bank, Eastern Bank, WebReply, Inc., MetroWest Subaru and Belkin Lookout Farm) and additional support from Middlesex Savings Bank, Fair & Yeager Insurance Company, The Frame Shop and Gallery, The Center for Arts in Natick (TCAN), The Walnut Hill School, Starbucks Coffee, Roche Brothers, Stop and Shop, BJ's Wholesale Club, and Entenmann's Outlet Store.

Putting Vision and Value Statements to Work

Vision and value statements are the foundation of our strategic planning effort. They provide a stable point of reference and a test for future actions.

Vision statements may appear unrealistic or contradictory. However, we are often guided by goals that may initially appear unachievable. If a family dreams of sending its children to college without a clear understanding of how they will afford the expense, their hopes and dreams for their children are still valid.

Since vision and value statements are a point of reference, they do not prescribe specific actions. Instead, the vision and value statements describe outcomes which may result from actions taken. The next phase of the planning process, Phase III, Natick: Our Strategic Options will outline a series of actions that might be taken to address Natick's vision for the future.

Phase III of the planning process will create a series of options: different actions that the town may take to move it closer toward its future vision, while preserving its current values.

The actions proposed in Phase III need not be the responsibility of town government alone, nor do they need to be achieved all at the same time. By communicating a clear vision, Natick may attract outside resources that share in the common vision for the future. Phase IV of the Natick strategic planning process will allow for the prioritization and phased implementation of desired actions.

Natick residents like living in Natick. The town is not divided by competing factions or controversy; instead, residents generally agree about their values and hopes for the future. For many residents, a desirable future would simply be an extension of the present. Natick's greatest challenge for the future may be to build effectively upon its success.

Value Statements in Detail

The following paragraphs provide some additional exposition and examples to explain the value statements in more detail. The value statements are in random order.

As citizens of Natick, we value Natick’s “small-town” sense as a safe, interconnected community fed by its heritage, pride and spirit of volunteerism, and by its diversity, derived from its tradition of affordability and welcoming nature.

Many citizens point to Natick’s “small town” feel as something very special. The small town feel means different things to different people, but in general people discussed the enjoyment of seeing friendly faces around town, feeling safe, knowing local business owners, having access to local government, and the relatively small scale of the community.

Many citizens felt that the small town feel results from interconnections throughout all aspects of town life. Natick citizens are seen as nice and friendly, and interact with each other across a wide spectrum of backgrounds by participating in government, schools and educational programs, events and day-to-day activities.

Natick’s government and many service and social organizations function largely through the efforts of citizen volunteers. Natick citizens point to the high level of involvement by volunteers as a key contributor to Natick’s sense of community and small-town feel.

Natick’s citizens take great pride in its long and rich history. The historical character of the community is preserved in the architecture of buildings around the community. Many annual events have become social traditions, including Natick’s big Fourth of July parade, Natick Days and the running of the Boston Marathon through Natick Center.

Citizens clearly identify the diversity of Natick’s citizenry as a core strength. Natick residents accept and value differences among themselves including socio-economic position, race, color, creed, national origin, sex, sexual preference, age, religious or political affiliation, physical disability or veteran status, regardless whether they are Natick natives, long-term residents or newcomers. Interconnections among people of different backgrounds strengthen the town’s social, governmental, economic and business environments.

Natick residents value that the town’s traditional affordability across a wide range of income levels. Natick’s affordability has helped to preserve its socio-economic diversity. Many residents perceive that this aspect of Natick is at risk: long-time residents are priced out of the community due to escalating real estate values, as homes are sold at higher prices to more affluent buyers.

As citizens of Natick, we value Natick’s stewardship of its diverse open spaces, and natural resources.

Natick residents value abundant open spaces reflecting its diverse geography, with a healthy aquifer, lakes, rivers, ponds, wetlands, wildlife habitat, trees, forests, open fields, farms and parks. Residents enjoy these spaces in a variety of ways ranging from individual meditation to family outings to organized recreational activities.

As citizens of Natick, we value a high-value education for students at all levels and abilities, and continuing educational opportunities for all Natick citizens.

Natick residents value educational excellence in their schools, meeting the individual needs of all learners, regardless of ability or grade level. Natick public schools strive for excellence through a culture of continuous improvement involving parents, teachers, administrators and policy-makers, strong curriculum content in diverse course offerings delivered by highly-effective teachers, a constructive educational environment, and town-wide pride in the schools' academic, sports and extracurricular programs.

As citizens of Natick, we value a variety of businesses that create a wide range of jobs and provide support to the community in many ways.

Natick citizens appreciate having many different businesses located in the community to provide local jobs. Local businesses provide support to the community in many other ways as well: supporting local not-for-profit agencies, providing services to support local efforts, contributing staff as volunteer help, and contributing capital to support public facilities.

As citizens of Natick, we value Natick Center, a vibrant focal point of our community.

Natick Center is a vibrant focal point for government, community activities, arts and cultural activities, commerce, dining, housing and transit. It preserves Natick's small-town feel and historical heritage through the Common, compatible architecture, diverse locally-owned businesses and burgeoning arts and entertainment communities.

As citizens of Natick, we value Natick's abundance of cultural, recreational and educational facilities, wide array of municipal services, and proximity to major transit and transportation resources that contribute to our high quality of life.

Natick citizens take advantage of the abundance of local cultural, recreational, and educational opportunities. Natick's Recreation and Parks Department has an extensive array of youth and adult education, recreation, and cultural programs. The Center for Arts in Natick (TCAN) and the Walnut Hill School are cultural institutions that draw arts patrons from Natick as well as the greater MetroWest Boston region. Natick's libraries host an active schedule of activities and the Natick Historical Society operates a unique museum with artifacts that date to pre-Federal times.

Citizens often choose to live in Natick because of its proximity to public transit, its placement at the intersection of major east-west and north-south roadways, and the variety of retail, commerce, and services that are all within a short distance.

Vision Statements in Detail

The following paragraphs provide some additional exposition and examples to explain the vision statements in more detail. Again, the vision statements are in random order.

As citizens of Natick, we aspire to create a future in which Natick is a healthy community of diverse and interconnected citizens, businesses, organizations and neighborhoods, where citizens of all ages, backgrounds and income levels can live, work and thrive.

Natick continues to be a community of communities with residential neighborhoods, well-defined commercial districts and an historic downtown. It controls the character of its growth by emphasizing small, mixed-use, community cores providing basic services to neighborhoods within effective walking and biking distances, and linking these cores to each other and to Natick Center through social networks, transit and physical networks of trails, bike paths and roads. Sidewalks connect neighbors with each other and link neighborhoods together and to schools. Walking trails and bike paths connect open spaces, recreational venues, shopping areas, schools and community cores, and link them all to Natick Center. Natick works proactively and cooperatively with developers to implement this vision, and to mitigate the impacts of development on transportation systems, natural resources, the environment and the Town's fiscal stability.

Natick maintains its small town feel while welcoming newcomers, fostering religious, ethnic, and cultural diversity and providing services to those in need.

Natick continues to be relatively affordable, compared to many of its neighbors. This affordability is maintained through its local tax rates, efficient governmental services and use of available development controls to encourage housing choices at multiple cost levels. Natick's affordability helps to preserve its socio-economic diversity by accommodating options for people of limited means, young families, Town employees and seniors.

Natick continues to develop its diverse economic base, with competitive local businesses, entrepreneurial start-ups, national chains, government facilities, major employers and others who provide a variety of local employment opportunities and share Natick's "sense of community."

Natick citizen-volunteers find activities that align with their interests and actively participate in the many organizations that contribute to Natick's sense of community. Connections among these groups extend Natick's social fabric into a community-of-communities.

Natick adopts a community-wide commitment to good health, diet and wellness, and freedom from substance abuse and domestic violence. Natick's hospital serves the town's general medical and emergency needs, with seamless connections to nearby regional specialty facilities.

As citizens of Natick, we aspire to create a future in which Natick's natural resources are preserved and accessible to the community.

Natick supports responsible stewardship of its natural resources, including its aquifer, open spaces, forests and trees, farms, parks, lakes, wildlife habitat and views. Natick may exercise this stewardship through appropriate acquisition, regulation, mitigation and restoration strategies. Within this stewardship ethic, Natick makes these natural resources appropriately accessible to

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the community. Natick adopts policies and practices to reduce pollution of air and water, increase energy independence and support preservation of available open spaces within the town.

As citizens of Natick, we aspire to create a future in which Natick Center is the vibrant core of the community, a unique and accessible destination for commerce, community and culture, day and night.

Natick Center is a vibrant, beautifully renovated and maintained, primary hub for government, community activities, local commerce, dense housing options, transit, arts, culture and entertainment. It blends unique local restaurants, shops, and businesses with residences and company headquarters. Activities on the Common complement shopping, commerce and public services during the day, while arts and cultural events support restaurants and entertainment venues on weekends and in evenings. Effective use of walking and biking paths, and local and metro transit, reduce the need for automobile traffic in Natick Center. For residents and visitors who drive to Natick Center, parking is available and well-marked.

Natick increases the scope and scale of activities to become an arts and culture magnet for the region, and Natick Center achieves recognition as the hub of this regional arts and culture economy. Natick's many cultural and recreational institutions coordinate events and activities to achieve leverage and visibility.

As citizens of Natick, we aspire to create a future in which Natick's public schools and programs are recognized as among the best.

Natick is the home of America's finest schools. Natick continues to provide educational excellence in meeting the diverse needs and learning styles of students at all levels and abilities. It achieves world-class results and delivers high educational value with continued efficient expenditure of funds by retaining and recruiting the most qualified and effective teachers, strengthening its curriculum, broadening its course offerings, emphasizing critical thinking, increasing integration with the greater Natick community, integrating state-of-the-art technology and creating modern and functional environments that contribute to effective learning.

Natick manages and maintains its school facilities to optimize their use and operational lifespan, and to make school facilities available to compatible community uses.

As citizens of Natick, we aspire to create a future in which Natick's self-government, supported by informed and engaged citizens, is fiscally sound, delivers services efficiently and communicates effectively with the public.

Natick's volunteer-based representative Town Meeting form of government is an effective framework for residents to address and resolve issues facing the town. It contributes to the sense of community and ownership, with opportunities for all residents, regardless of background, to engage each other with respect and to affect issues that concern them. The Town Meeting form of government helps make Natick's government open, accessible, accountable and representative.

The Town of Natick government is made up of and represents its wide diversity of citizens who fill all Town Meeting seats and boards and committees through competitive elective or

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appointive processes. Citizens are knowledgeable about government decision-making processes and have access to financial and other information that keep them informed about government activities.

The Natick community reaps abundant benefits from long-range planning, including smart development, coordination of resources to achieve efficiencies, financial leverage from outside funding, and increased civic engagement.

As citizens of Natick, we aspire to create a future in which Natick's public infrastructure and buildings fulfill their function efficiently and effectively to the satisfaction of the community, and are maintained in good working order.

Natick's facilities which no longer fulfill their function to the satisfaction of the community are modified or replaced. Natick invests in the maintenance of its facilities to keep them operating in good order and to extend the usable life of the facilities. Natick's facilities are built or modified to be energy efficient, to minimize environmental impacts, to be free of pollutants and toxins and to contribute to the overall good health of the community.

As citizens of Natick, we aspire to create a future in which Natick is a desirable and accessible destination that marshals local and regional partners and resources to solve problems and enhance the quality of life for all its citizens.

On issues that impact the quality of life for Natick's citizens, Natick pro-actively organizes local, regional and state resources to find solutions. Natick works with regional resources to create efficient transportation systems that: increase connections among residents, reduce dependence on automobiles and make getting around town easier.

Local and regional transit serves seniors, teens and others by connecting shopping, entertainment and recreational areas, government facilities, schools and community cores.

Natick participates in regional solutions that achieve financial leverage for local tax expenditures; using grants for innovative programs with regional impact, and gaining efficiencies in delivering services.